

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSM-03 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15
L-03 H-01 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 PRS-01
USIA-06 /070 W
-----081645Z 073466 /46

R 081300Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 832
INFO USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 AMMAN 1328

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E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, JO
SUBJECT: LOCAL REACTION TO PRESS STORIES LINKING KING HUSSEIN
TO CIA

1. SUMMARY: MANY JORDANIANS VIEW WASHINGTON POST
ARTICLE AS CONFIRMATION OF WHAT THEY HAVE LONG SUSPECTED
OF ROYAL PALACE, ALTHOUGH ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT OF KING
PERSONALLY COMES AS SOMEWHAT OF SURPRISE. CLOSE ROYAL
ADVISORS ARE DISTURBED AND PERPLEXED OVER CIA REVELATIONS
AND CONSEQUENT COMPLICATIONS AFFAIR IS CAUSING IN U.S.-
GOJ RELATIONS. CONTRAST OF KING'S FORTHRIGHT DISCUSSION
OF ALLEGATIONS IN MARCH 7 NEWSWEEK INTERVIEW WITH GOJ'S
STRICT CENSORSHIP OF FOREIGN ARTICLES DISCUSSING SUBJECT
(INCLUDING MARCH 7 NEWSWEEK) HAS ENCOURAGED RUMORS, INCLUDING
SPECULATION THAT USG IS

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ABOUT TO ABANDON KING OR REPLACE HIM WITH PALESTINIANS.
RECENT EDITORIALS IN LOCAL MEDIA HAVE STRESSED DUAL
THEMES OF KING'S DEVOTION TO COUNTRY, AND JORDANIANS'
SUPPORT FOR HIM. WHILE SHORT-RUN CONSEQUENCES HAVE
PROVEN MANAGEABLE, CHARGES MAY SURFACE AGAIN IN FUTURE
SHOULD CURRENT PEACE OFFENSIVE FAIL OR DOMESTIC ILLS
PROVE INTRACTABLE. END SUMMARY.

2. REACTIONS OF JORDANIAN PUBLIC AND OFFICIALDOM TO WASHINGTON POST ALLEGATIONS HAVE VARIED, WITH COMMON DENOMINATOR OF INTENSE CURIOSITY TINGED WITH APPREHENSION UNDERLYING MOST CONVERSATIONS WITH EMBASSY ON SUBJECT. MOST JORDANIANS REMAIN VAGUE ON DETAILS OF POST ALLEGATIONS, AND ARE ONLY DIMLY AWARE THAT TOPIC HAS BEEN ELABORATED ON IN OTHER PUBLICATIONS, SINCE GOJ PUT STRICT EMBARGO, WHICH ONLY NOW IS BEGINNING TO EASE, ON ENTRY INTO JORDAN OF WESTERN NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES CONTAINING STORY. CENSORED MARCH 7 NEWSWEEK CONTAINING KING'S INTERVIEW WITH DEBORCHGRAVE DID NOT APPEAR ON LOCAL NEWSTANDS UNTIL SUNDAY, MARCH 6, ONE WEEK AFTER PUBLICATION. CLADESTINE COPIES OF HERALD TRIBUNE ARE CIRCULATING AMONG EDUCATED ELITE. WHILE LOCAL MEDIA CARRIED ONLY FOR ONE DAY OFFICIAL FEBRUARY 18 GOJ STATEMENT LABELING STORY COMPENDIUM OF FABRICATIONS AND DISTORTIONS (WITHOUT, HOWEVER, PROVIDING DETAILS OF ALLEGATIONS), TOPIC OTHERWISE DID NOT APPEAR IN LOCAL MEDIA UNTIL FEBRUARY 28, IN CONTEXT OF KING'S NEWSWEEK INTERVIEW.

3. IN SPITE OF FACT THAT GOJ WAS HOLDING UP DISTRIBUTION OF NEWSWEEK, AMMAN RADIO AND PRESS FEBRUARY 38 AND MARCH 1 GAVE BROAD COVERAGE TO DEBORCHGRAVE INTERVIEW, AGAIN PROVIDING A LIMITED SUMMARY WITHOUT TRANSLATION OF TEXT. PRESS EMPHASIZED THEMES THAT WHATEVER CIA HELP WAS RECEIVED WAS FOR NATIONAL PURPOSES, NOT KING'S PERSONAL GAIN, AND THAT JORDANIANS REMAIN LOYAL TO KING HUSSEIN. MARCH 1
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ASH-SHA'AB EDITORIALY COMMENTED: "WE IN JORDAN ARE NOT ASHAMED TO ADMIT THAT WE RECEIVE AID FROM VARIOUS FOREIGN SOURCES, SINCE THIS AID IS NOT USED FOR PERSONAL PURPOSES, BUT RATHER FOR BUILDING JORDAN...JORDAN, UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF HUSSEIN, WILL REMAIN STRONGER THAN CAMPAIGNS AND ABOVE ALL SUSPICIONS AND THOSE WHO CAST DOUBTS."

4. GOJ CENSORSHIP OF FOREIGN PUBLICATIONS, COMBINED WITH SENSATIONAL NATURE OF POST ALLEGATIONS AND TIMING OF THEIR RELEASE, HAS INEVITABLY ENGENDERED TORRENT OF RUMOR AND SPECULATION WHICH HAS CONTINUED UNABATED. CLAIMS OF CIA CONNECTION WITH HIGH OFFICIALS IN GOJ HAVE BEEN HEARD AROUND AMMAN FOR YEARS, SO

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AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 AMMAN 1328

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POST STORY HAS SEEMED PAUSIBLE TO MOST JORDANIANS
(ALTHOUGH ALLEGATIONS OF PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT OF KING
HAS BEEN GREETED WITH CARYING DEGRESS OF SURPRISE AND
CHAGRIN) WESTERNIZED UPPER-CLASS SOURCES HAVE SHRUGGED
OFF AFFAIR WITH "WE ALWAYS ASSUMED IT" SOPHISTICATION
ALTHOUGH SOME HAVE EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT EFFECT
REVELATIONS MIGHT HAVE ON PEACE NEGOTIATIONS PROCESS.
SOME NATIONALISTIC PALESTINIANS EXPRESSED ILL-CONCEALED
GLEE ABOUT ARTICLES REPRESENTING"ONE MORE NAIL IN
HUSSEIN'S COFFIN" RHETORIC WHICH HAS ADDED TO
SUSPICIONS OF SOME EAST BANKERS INCLUDING HIGH PALACE
OFFICIALS THAT ARTICLE IS PRELUDE TO US-ORCHESTRATED
CAMPAIGN TO REPACE HASHEMITE REGIME WITH PALESTINIANS
CONTROL OF JORDAN AS WAY OUT OF PALESTINIAN QUAGMIRE
IN MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT. POST ALLEGATIONS AS WELL
HAVE HAD INITIAL EFFECT OF "DRYING UP"SOME OF EMBASSYS
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SOURCES OF INFORMATION WHO ARE AMONG THOSE CRITICAL OF
REGIME FOR ALLEGED CORRUPTION AND SOCIAL NEGLECT. SOME
NOW BELIEVE IT POINTLESS TO SHARE SUCH CRITICISM WITH
US --OR EVEN TO HOPE FOR CHANGE IN JORDANS POLITICS
GIVEN PRESUMEED "CIA BACKING" OF REGIME.

5. KINGS NEWSWEEK INTERVIEW IN A SENSE BROUGHT SITUATION TO A HEAD, IN THAT KING IS REGARDED AS HAVING "ADMITTED" TRUTH OF CLAIM THAT HE RECEIVED FUNDING FROM CIA. MAJOR THRUST OF LOCAL RUMOR MILL HAS THEREFORE BECOME "WHY DID US DO THIS(ALLEGEDLY RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO POST) TO JORDAN, RATHER THAN "HAVE YOU HEARD THE NEWS ABOUT THE KING"? TAKING BULL BY THE HORNS GOJ WENT ON OFFENSIVE MARCH 5 IN FORM OF ASH-SHA-AB EDITORIAL WRITTEN BY CHIEF OF PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS DEPT IN MININFO, AHMED AL-ATOUM. ENTITLED "WE SHALL NOT KNEEL", EDITORIAL DID NOT DENY ALLEGATIONS ABOUT PAYMENTS, BUT RATHER LINKED THEIR EXPOSURE TO STATEMENTS MADE BY ISRAELI GENERAL SHARON TO EFFECT THAT "KING OF JORDAN IS PRINCIPAL OBSTACLE TO REALIZATION OF MIDDLE EAST PEACE." 'ATOUM WROTE, "THE KING OF JORDAN IS AN OBSTACLE IN ISRAELI THROATS, AND THUS THE REVELATION OF THE PAYMENT OF CIA FUNDS WAS THROWN IN THE WAY OF THE AMERICANS SECRETARY OF STATE AT 3:00 PM ON THE DAY HE WAS VISITING JORDAN IN THE HOPE THAT THE LEADERSHIP OF THIS COUNTRY MIGHT BE SHAKEN.. BY ZIONIST INFLUENCE".

6. MEDIA TREATMENT REFLECTS INCREASING PARANOIA LONG TERM RESILIENCE OF US-JORDAN RELATIONSHIP. SOME CLOSE ROYAL ADVISORS PRIVATELY EXPRESSED FEAR, FOR EXAMPLE THAT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS MAY COMPLICATE US-JORDANIANS RELATIONS, SOME GOJ OFFICIALS EVEN SPECULATE THAT POST STORY MAY AUGUR POLICY DECISION BY USG TO EAST OUT KING HUSSEIN.

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RUMOR IS CURRENTLY CIRCULATING THAT A LIST OF FOURTEEN NAMES OF PROMINENT JORDANIANS OSTENSIVLY ON CIA PAYROOL HAVE BEEN OR WILL BE PUBLISHED RUMOR-SPREADERS HAVE BEGUN LISTING THE NAMES.

7. WITH KING ABSENT FROM JORDAN, AND PUBLICS PERCEPTION OF AFFAIR CHANGING DAILY, IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO PROVIDE FULL ASSESSEMENT OF DOMESTIC REPURCUSSIONS EFFECT OF ALLEGATIONS. MUCH DEPENDS ON PUBLICS (AND ESPECIALLY ARMY'S) ABILITY TO ACCEPT KINGS NEWSWEEK INTERPRETATION OF EVENT--IE THAT HE ACCEPTED PAYMENTS BUT SPENT THEM FOR PUBLIC GOOD. IN JORDAN WHERE KINGS HUSSEINS PERSONAL APPEAR HAS ALWAYS BEEN A KEY TO POLITICAL STABILITY CIA CHARGES CAN ADD TO DISENCHANTMENT WITH KING, WHICH IN ANY CASE COULD OCCUR INDEPENDENTLY AS RESULT OF FAILURE

OF CURRENT PEACE OFFENSIVE, OR INABILITY TO DEAL WITH
DOMESTIC ILLS OF INFLATION AND POOR PUBLIC SERVICES.
FINALLY GREAT DEAL DOMESTICALLY DEPENDS ON DEGREE
TO WHICH KING IS STILL PERCEIVED TO HAVE US
SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE AND THAT OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS
REMAIN CLOSE AND HARMONIOUS. LOCAL EYES ARE LOOKING
AT WASHINGTON AND KING'S COMING VISIT AS ONE SUCH
INDICATION. HOWEVER GIVEN THE RAMPANT RUMOR
CAMPAIGN OF THIS ISSUE BOTH KING AND PUBLIC
PERCEPTION MAY WELL CALL FOR SOME EARLIER OVERT
SIGNS OF US OFFICIAL ATTITUDE TOWARD HIM AND
HIS REGIME.
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Message Attributes

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